

ASTROLABE – AN INSTRUMENT WITH A PAST AND A FUTURE

The Astrolabe is a very ancient tech savvy device that was used by the Greeks primarily as a navigational tool. It was used to find the position of the sun and stars in the sky to pinpoint direction. It was kinda like an ancient G.P.S. device. A typical astrolabe was made of brass and was about 6 inches in diameter, although much larger and smaller ones were made.

The astrolabe is the technology used to show how the sky looks at a specific place at a given time. This is done by drawing the sky on the face of the astrolabe and marking it so positions in the sky are easy to find. Once certain items such as the north star were located in the sky, Greek sailors could use the device to head in the right direction.

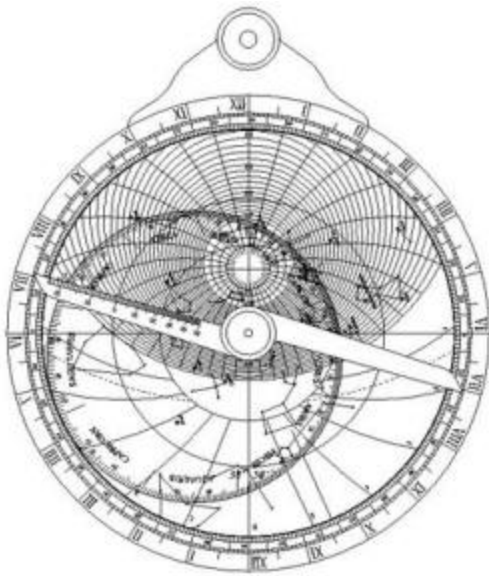
The history of the astrolabe begins more than two thousand years ago. The credit for the invention of the earliest astrolabe goes to a Greek named Hipparchus. He created an astrolabe that gave the world an important mechanism to understand the celestial sphere more accurately. This popular piece of technology was later passed on and improved to other civilizations as a result of cultural diffusion.

All of the everyday uses of the astrolabe are not known, but they were certainly used primarily as a navigational tool. Other known uses of the astrolabe include telling time during the day or night, to find the time of sunrise and sunset (thus the length of the day), and to locate celestial objects in the sky.

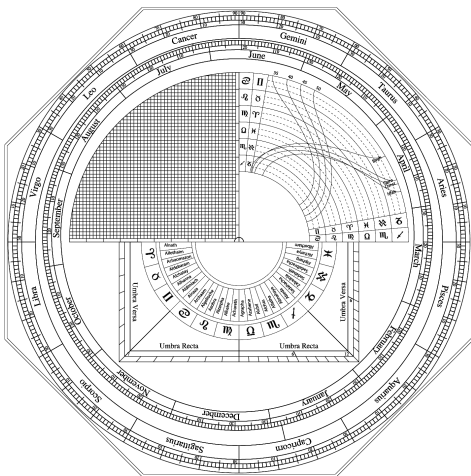
Although we no longer use an astrolabe, we still need to know all of the things it once was able to figure out. This sounds like a very advanced piece of technology

that was extremely helpful to ancient civilizations. Can you think of a modern device that can do all or most of the things that an astrolabe once did?

Front of an Astrolabe



Back of an Astrolabe



Source: Modified from the Summit County Resource Center